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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the challenges of effectively matching the needs of youth populations with program services. An introduction reviews some broad issues that shape the discussion, namely whether youth is a period integrated into the course of life or a separatist culture. A second section proposes an ecological approach to youth services, which proceeds from the assumption that human behavior and patterns of social relationships are not independent of place. This section looks at models for youth development and program foundation. A third section looks at varieties of personal, social, and cultural development among youth, including identity formation and community influences. The following section reviews the developmental and environmental stresses involved in growing up, such as risks of delinquency, and mutually-reinforcing multiple risk factors. The fifth section suggests how to mitigate the risks in young lives through social support systems that help young people to learn to cope with risks and find a balance between inner resilience and social support, considers how adults and community resources can play a role, and emphasizes the importance of community-based collaborative roles for youth professionals. A final section explores building service communities for youth. An author biography is included. (Contains 65 references.) (JB)

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JOINING YOUTH NEEDS AND PROGRAM SERVICES

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JOINING YOUTH NEEDS AND PROGRAM SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The period of the life cycle known as "youth" is a very special one. Covering ages 16 to 24, it is more accountable than childhood, but still a time of growing and developing, of preparation and promise for adult roles. During this period, parents and adult caregivers strive to help youth grow and develop into proper adults and have a happy and productive life. But it is also a time of trouble and uncertainty for youth, during which some very special and increasingly ominous problems—drug and alcohol abuse, dropping out of school and chronic unemployment, sexual laxity leading to early pregnancy and HIV infection, and aggressive and violent behavior—can arise. Moreover, since the 1960s, we have come to perceive youth as having a culture of its own, almost unassociated with the other periods of the life course and in many ways in opposition or even conflict with adult society.

YOUTH: AN INTEGRATED PERIOD OF THE LIFE COURSE OR A SEPARATIST CULTURE?

An impressive array of scholars has attested to the transformation of youth into an alienated and isolated society unto themselves. Friedenberg (1963), for example, described youth as frequently "the victim of hostile social processes" often "goaded into hostile action by adult society." Parsons (1975) insisted that youth were forced to look to each other for social codes as a result of conflicting expectations from adult society and a manifest lack of adult guidance. Fellow sociologist Riesman (1950) described youth as becoming "other directed"; they turned away from their families to seek models in the abstract, and fantasized images in films and on television. But it was sociologist Coleman (1960) who most

distinctly and directly identified a separatist youth culture in his study of high schools. He described youth as "inward looking," experiencing a "press toward autonomy," and holding in high regard other youth who successfully challenged adults, or who acted autonomously of adults (1974).

Today we are still prone to see youth itself as the problem and to forget that the "youth" problems concerning us most are the problems that we have engendered as a society, and that frequently developed and remain among adults. Drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and even HIV infection, first emerged among adults and represent some of the most dysfunctional lessons our children have learned from us. Nevertheless, the perception that youth problems differ from those of adults has informed the ways that we both define and treat the needs of youth. The result has been that much of our treatment strategy is remedial, aimed at correcting those dramatic youth problems which seem most pressing at the moment, without due attention to what underlying needs of youth are neglected or even ignored in society. The perception has also fostered a demand for a national programmatic strategy with the effects of diminishing the importance of local solutions for very different needs and problems in particular communities and hindering attention to the specialized needs that develop as a result of where and how particular youth live.

Youth as an Integrated Sector in Community Life

This paper argues that the needs of youth are largely determined by where and how they live, and that youth differ from each other just as surely as do adults. The argument leads to the proposition that the existence of an "anti-adult" youth culture, insulated and isolated from the life course of the individual and the daily lives of our communities, is more myth than reality. As the result of almost two decades of field research with youth in communities throughout the country, and an extensive review of the research and policy literature, my associates and I have concluded

that it is the local community and its component families, peer groups, schools and other social institutions—not some national or regional cultural or social force—which has meaning and influence for youthful behavior and social decision-making. Neither are groups of youth in opposition to adult mediators or the community they represent. The advice and influence of peers are most salient for status issues such as clothing styles or musical tastes, but the advice of parents and other caregivers is even more significant in connection with future plans and problems, especially those involving entry into adult society.

We see youth as an integral part of the life course in which the young person needs a peer group to move from a family-based childhood dependency to an interdependent adulthood. Yankelovich has identified two "truths" about the development of the self: "One is that the self is private, and alone, and wholly encased in one's body. The other is that one is a real self only to the extent that caring and reaching out beyond the self continue" (Yankelovich, 1981, p. 40).

Supporting Community-Based Research

For over a decade spanning the 1970s and 1980s, Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni and I, along with a small group of social scientists, educators, and psychoanalysts working with teams of graduate students, followed a line of research on the interactive effects of families, peers, schools, the workplace, the criminal justice system, and other social institutions for youth in American community life. Then, from 1989 through 1992, along with a new generation of graduate students, we went back to some of these same communities to look at how youth needs are perceived and caring is shown or denied by the various social institutions. We found considerable evidence that the developmental search for a responsive and caring environment fostering social competence is an interactional process, one that includes the efforts of the young people themselves. As part of

this search, however, youth also look to significant adults for a unified view of the requirements for social competence—a facilitative and caring environment.

Further, we found that communities do not see or perceive all of their young people as the same; every community "sorts" youngsters into real or imagined social and behavioral groups (Calhoun & Ianni, 1976). There is a great diversity in the needs of youth and responses to them within as well as among communities.

Southside. In an urban, inner-city site which we called "Southside," the ethnic diversity provided a basis for a youth sorting pattern that paralleled the multi-ethnic character of the school and the community. The sorting process, however, must also be considered in terms of the residential segregation in the community which tended to perpetuate and reinforce cultural differences. Since peer groups were neighborhood-based, opportunities for multicultural experience were limited to the school, but there, too, the sorting patterns established by residential patterns were the most important determinants. What seemed to result from the artificial melding of community-based cultural and social differences in the school was a pattern of conflictual relationships, including peer interaction. Clothing, posing, even forms of walking and talking, were ethnically identified and often exaggerated to make the point. The most frequent form of interaction both within and between school cliques was the "snap session" in which a highly structured and stylized way of talking and teasing became almost a ritual means of expressing hostility.

A further result of this sorting pattern based on ethnicity was the lack of a homogeneous pattern of peer group or cross peer group organization relating all youth to each other. Patterns of organization were based on ethnically defined "turfs" or territory inside and on the periphery of the school, and a system of "clicks," "crews," and even a few formal

gangs, which symbolized and displayed the social segregation (Ianni, 1983). The Chinese American youth gangs, for example, like the Italian American youth gangs which preceded them in parts of the surrounding community, showed a close association with adult society and reflected its kinship system. Such gangs were highly structured, often related to adult criminal groups or "tongs" that were based on family ties and shared provincial origin, and they served some important community economic functions. African American and Hispanic American gangs, on the other hand, seemed much less related to economic functions and much more to the development of an identity and recognition.

Sheffield. In "Sheffield," an affluent suburban site, homogeneity rather than heterogeneity was the principle characteristic of the organization of youth in the high school as well as in the community. Families there had very similar backgrounds and their lifestyle centered heavily on preparing youngsters for college and future careers. Much of the peer association, particularly in early adolescence, seemed parent-organized, with a large number of athletic, social, and community-oriented programs linking families with the schools. Our overall observations showed a clear pattern of competitive relationships developing even in the elementary schools. Schools, closely linked with families and family expectations, were structured to encourage the competitive spirit, with an elaborate tracking system, competitive academic as well as athletic contests, and frequent exhortations from the administration as well as teachers to do one's best in every endeavor. What developed was a pattern of peer-selection based on "best friends" which worked to establish a social system of "jocks," "freaks," "brains," and other groupings emphasizing different value orientations, and, thus essentially non-competitive.

Green Valley. The formation of peer relationships in a rural site, "Green Valley," was structured by the same characteristics that dominated

so much of the social life there: isolation from many of the major social institutions, such as social and criminal justice services, and workplaces located outside the community. The school was the only non-family institution that brought youth together. Even there, the structure of the school day, from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with bussing the predominant means of transportation, perpetuated the effects of isolation as the youth returned to one of the ten small communities which fed into the centralized high school. Within the school, youth were sorted by community of origin and there was little mixing between youngsters from different communities and traveling on different busses. The effects of this isolation, and the concomitant tendency to withdraw, were also apparent in interviews with the youngsters and in their career expectations. Getting a driver's license as a passport out of the community, and graduation from high school as a basis for finding a job "somewhere else," were prominent themes in their future plans.

Matching Youth Programs to Youth Needs

Not only is there diversity in communities and in the needs of their youth, but there is also considerable diversity in the types of programs designed to respond to these needs. Most programs for youth are based on an intergenerational socialization model where adults provide or attempt to provide guidance and experience, but where there are also some which team peers (Ianni, 1989). Some programs are very focused; the seek to enhance educational attainment or to divert youth from delinquency or substance abuse. Other programs see their potential influence on young lives as much broader, seeking to transform character, instill moral values, and direct youth toward socially rewarding and fulfilling lives. But while they may differ in approach and take place in a variety of contexts, all programs attempting to meet youth needs, like all patterns of human relationships, are interactive with and affected by their environment. Different communities can provide very different values and expectations

to youngsters. Even within the same community, different social contexts, such as the home, the school, or the peer group can provide different standards or models for behavior. This places a special burden on professional and volunteer program developers alike to understand how the youth they work with experience those contextual differences and how the services they provide can be facilitated or confounded by those differences.

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO YOUTH SERVICES

Simply fostering better understanding and relationships between youth and adults or among youth, or just improving awareness of youth needs and delivery of services to meet them, will not transform communities. We need first to proceed from the ecological assumption that human behavior and patterns of social relationships are not independent of place. The major conclusion drawn by Cole and his colleagues (Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp, 1971) from their study of the relation between culture and learning and thinking was that "...cultural differences in cognition reside more in the situations to which particular cognitive processes are applied than in the existence of a process in one cultural group and its absence in another (p. 233). Similarly, there is ample evidence that community is what gives continuity to caring about and meeting the needs of youth; it preserves and institutionalizes it. The history of social movements should teach us that the institutionalization of behavior, not the modification of individual behavior, is what renders caring about youth and their needs community property (Ianni, 1967). In operative terms, it means that to effectively teach youth the importance and benefits of caring about themselves and others, communities must become milieus and environments where it is possible and, even desirable, to be caring. Mischel (1974) put it succinctly: "...in my view, one should not expect social behavior to be consistent unless the relevant social learning and cognitive conditions are arranged to maintain the behavior cross-situationally" (p. 591).

Models for Youth Development

When we reviewed the popular, scientific, and policy literature on youth development we found two contrasting and sometimes competing models described. One model has been associated with epigenetic stage

theories ever since Hall (1904) first established the view that the individual's behavior unfolds through a series of age-specific patterns built into the organism. It is based on the assumption that the basic behavioral and social competencies are developed in sequence by various social institutions, first established in the family and then modified and extended by other social contexts—the peer group, the school, work settings, etc.—but always as elaborations of the predetermined orientations. On the other side of the argument are those who, ever since Benedict (1948), described the effects of modern culture in producing role discontinuities from childhood to adulthood, in contrast to the more gradual and consistent transition to adult status in primitive societies; they see social forces as determining, if not creating, the character of adolescence. The second model, which characterizes much of this social context literature, assumes that specific sets of skills or competencies are more or less independently developed in each of the variety of institutional or situational settings as a response to the demands of social forces in the effective environment.

A different model emerged in our research. Ethnographic and psychodynamic data community combined to indicate a synergistic rather than sequential or independent pattern of relationships among institutional contexts in the lives of youth. How the various institutional contexts are integrated in terms of continuity and congruence, rather than the individual impact of any single institution, emerged in our analyses as the most important determinant of the psychocultural environment for youth. Congeniality among the values expressed by the various institutional contexts of youthful lives, and clarity and consistency in the standards and expectations forming the basis for guidance, were important to both individual and social development. Value confusion and personal or even interpersonal conflict occur when the various social institutions present different or even conflicting values and expectations. Thus, to develop a socially competent identity, youth need to experience a community's

coordinate provision of a structure of values, standards, and expectations which demonstrate its commitment to a facilitating and caring environment.

A Community-Based Youth Charter

What emerged in our research and is also becoming widely accepted is the fact that the development of youthful ego identity is not sufficiently explained by the power of peer relationships, nor is the "press toward autonomy" essentially a movement away from adults. Rather, youth development is characterized by a search for a responsive environment that will provide a psychosocial structure to facilitate social competence and identity development. Young people help shape that environment but also seek guidance from significant adults who set behavior standards and expectations. They learn and express those standards not so much as sanctioned rules as a loose collection of shared understandings that operates to put limits on permissible behavior.

When, for example, we asked teenagers why they did or did not become involved in some activity, seek some objective or goal, avoid some danger or risk, or make one or another behavior choice, they seldom attributed their decision to any specific rule or particular authority system such as the family or the school. Rather, they offered a much more generalized explanation, usually phrased as "I don't know why but it seemed the right thing to do," or "That's the way we do things in Branchville." Parents, teachers and other adults were equally nonspecific in describing the reasons for what they expected from teenagers: "that's the way most parents here feel," or, frequently heard from school staff, "that's what the community expects."

We came to call this unwritten "sensed" set of expectations and standards a community's "youth charter." While it was nowhere set down

or codified, every community we studied seemed to have one, and both youngsters and adults usually knew its behavioral limits. Much of the daily life of youth proceeds from the conventions that emerge from shared understandings. Like so much else in life, the charter begins in the family where the growing child learns from the comments and choices of parents and older siblings to value or devalue individual and group traits and proscriptions. As peers, the school, and other social worlds in the community become increasingly important, the community establishes a comprehensive frame of reference which both integrates and transcends the influence of any particular institutional sector. The youth charter establishes a quasi-independent and relatively stable system of conventions and normative behavior and provides role identities and ego ideals rather than expressing specific and definitive rules or models. Consequently, it defends against conflicts between teenagers and important adult caretakers and reduces internal conflict between personal desires and social requirements. It is through the charter that youth can know themselves, their social worlds, and their current and future place within them.

Further, a community's charter should empower significant adults in youth's lives to provide the services and supports—and guides for their use—for an environment that provides the standards and expectations for structuring growth and development. Communities differ considerably in how they structure and empower their youth charters largely as a result of how they envision and organize the pattern of relationships among their institutional contexts. The ambiance of these relationships can be more important for youth development than the individual contribution of the family, the school, or peer groups. While each can have a facilitating or restrictive effect on communicating a caring and supporting environment, multiple deficits can combine and reinforce each other to produce the feeling among youth that "nobody cares."

Chartering Environments to Facilitate Successful Youth Development Programs

D. W. Winnicott, the late British analyst, located cultural experience and development in the potential space between the individual and his environment: "an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (1967, p. 370). This space is where the establishment of trusting relationships begins:

> The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living (Winnicott, 1971, p. 18).

Winnicott called this arena "the transitional sphere": a unique pattern of objects, individuals, and their dynamic relations somewhere between the internal world of fantasy and the external world of reality. Thus, it permits the possibility of tutored experimentation and social learning with more direct access than fantasy but less risk than reality. I see this transitional sphere as a potential space which can be provided by the community youth charter where growing and developing youngsters can "try on" the standards and expectations of the community culture. Winnicott proposed that our responsibility as adults is to foster a sense of trust in children by first learning to tolerate their frustration and aggressive seeking for satisfaction. Parents and other caregiving adults must, Winnicott said, create a "holding environment," an embracing and supportive presence which provides the time for children to learn to trust that they will meet their needs. The other crucial factor is that children must be given "the opportunity to contribute," to help accomplish that transitional and facilitating environment for themselves (Winnicott, 1965).

Winnicott was talking about family dynamics in infancy and early childhood and so described mothers and, eventually, fathers as the important agents for providing the stable caring that leads to trust. But we have found the same pattern present in some youth networks associated with an adult-sponsored activity—an introduction into the world of computers or theater, or a social action or religious program, for example. The behavior, the learning, even the conversational language of the adolescents, seemed to become shared acts in which all participated as a clearly functionally rather than randomly developed peer group. Inevitably, there seemed to be some valorized, often even idealized adult who possessed the knowledge recognized by the youth as important to skill and competence in that area of interest.

Winnicott (1965) also described the "facilitating environment" as one where the parent not only models for the child, but keeps objects, ideas, values, and other cultural symbols about for him or her to "pick up" on as part of that environment. Thus, the role of that environment is to provide the supports and resources for the development of communal caring behavior and attitudes. This role, too important to be left to chance development and imprinting, must become part of the formal agenda of organizations and communities, providing the program services and supports for their youth.

Different cultures and subcultures, communities, institutional sectors, and families, organizations, and agencies within those sectors, use different formulae for socializing youth. A juvenile justice detention center, for example, may process inmates in a group with a formal training program, "breaking them down" through a series of discreet and fixed steps before "rebuilding" them through rehabilitation, and even eventually eliminating those who cannot or will not be "rebuilt." A school, on the other hand, may process students individually, employ self-enhancing

strategies in a sequential and individually variable fashion, allowing the student to proceed through criterion-referenced evaluative procedures.

While not all institutional sector-specific socialization practices must be of the same design, they should be coordinate. A socialization program which takes a community rather than institutional sector approach to developing and enhancing caring behavior and attitudes must address the "whole child" perspective. The importance of a community-wide context is that its inclusiveness can provide a sense of connectedness through an apprenticeship-like model of association with caring adults. Participation in meaningful activities with them can result in the internalization of the social controls and moral expectations that are essential to adulthood in America.

VARIETIES OF PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG YOUTH

It was pointed out earlier that youth, like adults, are as diverse as the communities they live in, and often live very different lives from other youth even in the same community. One reason why youth nevertheless seem so similar is that they are all undergoing the same changes, adjusting to new bodies, giving up the freedoms of childhood, learning new roles, experiencing the same uncertainties about their futures, and wondering if they will fail or succeed.

Some of the differences we see or imagine among youth result from biological predispositions and characteristics such as gender or health status; or from unique experiences such as the death of a parent or some other traumatic event. But diversity also results from the differences they experience in their environments. Young people grow up in poverty or affluence or some place in between. They come from broken or intact families, attend good or bad schools, and can encounter very different role models in their communities. These differences help produce both the diversity and the uniqueness of human personalities. Also, they can and usually do, account for very different developmental trajectories that may produce risk factors capable of significantly affecting the life course.

Thus, the differences place a special burden on program developers whose interventions must account for them. Youth programs should have as their goal helping young people build a sense of personal and social competence and attachments which helps structure an identity congruent with their environment and provides a sense of belonging. This means that those who design programs must consider how to strengthen the social contexts so they foster the youth's growth and development; and facilitate the affiliative process between youth and their environments,

between the youth and the significant adults, and among youth themselves. Program designers must, of course, understand the nature of child and adolescent development, but it is equally important to understand the effects of social and cultural environments on youth growth and learning, and the problems and risks youth may encounter and with what possible results.

Understanding Community Differences and Youthful Diversity

While there has been a longstanding debate about the relative importance of nature and nurture, most of us now accept the fact that neither has an exclusive or even deterministic role in development, and that they are interdependent (Bowlby, 1988; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Ianni, 1989; Moos, 1974). Biological problems such as physical handicaps and health hazards and stresses can have a deterrent effect on development. Similarly, children are born with or without certain talents or aptitudes and with differing levels of ability. Yet few of these handicaps or deficiencies are intractable or insurmountable if we can intervene in a child's life course with sufficient insight and sensitivity. Youngsters' internal resources are nurtured or stifled by the opportunities available to them and the presence or absence of adults who can help them find needed resources.

Where do adolescents encounter the peers and adults who can influence their lives? Obviously the answer is to be found in where and how young people spend their time. Growing up in an affluent suburb can expose a young person to very different values, resources, expectations, and adult role models than those available in the urban inner-city. No matter how disorganized and barren a community may seem, there are certain relevant social contexts that make social life work. Individuals and the groups they form empower these environments to teach and nurture,

but they can also stifle achievement, waste or misuse abilities and talents, and hinder social growth and development.

The Families. The primary social context in which all of us begin life is the family. The headstart the family has in children's lives gives it an enormous influence which can last throughout life. Despite their universality, however, families differ in structure, stability, amount and quality of the time spent together, ability to buffer young lives against internal and external stresses, and provision of nurturance, affection, and trust. The structure and character of families are also changing; they are smaller than in the past, are more likely to have both parents working outside the home, to be single-parent maintained, and to be "blended" when remarried parents bring children from previous marriages into the new family. The new waves of immigrant and refugee families add more cultural diversity and pose difficulties for youngsters who must make adjustments to a new culture and sometimes to conflicting values as well. Homelessness, with its devastating effects on family life and child development, is yet another example of the difficulty many young people are now having in finding a stable and secure social group.

Peer Groups. Another social group which plays a major role in youth development is the peer group, the behavior-setting social network which grows in importance when children go off to school and move into greater contact with the community outside the family. Much has been made of the negative effects of peer groups in isolating youth from adult values and insulating them against acceptance of the community's expectations and standards. Peer groups do exert powerful influences on their members, particularly in terms of pressing for conformity, often causing anxiety and stress for themselves as well as for parents and other caregiving adults. Peer groups, however, grow out of and continue to be related to adult institutions such as the family, the school, the neighborhood, and the workplace. They provide a locus for peer

interaction and permit group as well as individual questioning of adult values and standards, but very few adolescents can or ever do completely reject the adult world and its standards and goals. Adolescents in particular communities are usually much more similar in their value orientations to their parents and other local adults than they are with their peers in other dissimilar communities.

Adult Contacts. Adolescents also turn to nearby adults for information, validation, and guidance about the future. Most often it is to parents, other relatives, neighbors, or the parents of friends. They can also turn to any other adult willing and able to provide the resources and support needed to find an identity and social competence within some mutually valued social world. Adults, however, must be aware of their role in young lives and act them out with authenticity. Wehlage and his associates (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989), for example, in their analysis of schools as communities of support, point out that social bonding between student and teacher can remain fixed at the improved social relationship level without the student's accepting the teacher's academic demands. Similarly, Bryan and Walbeck (1970) experimentally studied the behavior of children in response to an adult model who either preached or practiced generosity. They found that whether the model verbally expressed either generosity or selfishness had very little effect on children's expression of generosity, while visible generous or selfish behavior by the model had considerable effect. Similarly, Harris (1970), attempting but failing to demonstrate experimentally a hypothesized relationship between reciprocity and generosity and a norm of social responsibility and altruism, also found that observation of a model can have "...strong effects on the occurrence, amount, and direction of an altruistic behavior, when pressures to perform this behavior are minimal..." (p. 327).

Adolescence has always been described as a transitional period between the more family-oriented world of the child and the more socially diffuse but autonomously experienced world of the adult. It is also, however, transitional in another sense. If adolescence is a process of psychological and social separation and individuation from the family, then the uncertainty and instability imposed by the new realities and unanticipated relationships must be just as anxiety producing as they were the first time around. As children approach adolescence, and even more so as they reach out to find a structure of values and standards for guidance in the teen years, they move further and further outside the family circle and must learn to interact with others in the social contexts of the community. The successful union of adolescents with these new environments requires that communities care enough to establish and promote the nurturance and understanding that will enable and empower youth to contribute to their own personal and social development.

How Youth Form an Identity and Find a Personal Self and Social Role

Discovering and helping to determine who and what to become is a major task of growing up and a source of both satisfaction and frustration for many youngsters (Barnes, 1990; Benson, 1990; Shapiro & Carr, 1991). To some extent this involves biological changes. Some of these changes, such as accelerated growth and developing sexuality, are visible. Others, such as more abstract thinking and reasoning abilities, are less directly observable. These physical and intellectual changes that happen during adolescence are harbingers of adult status and roles but they do not happen evenly or on equal schedules for all young people. This variability in growth rates and development can produce considerable anxiety and frustration for early or late maturing youth, with important implications for self-image and esteem.

But these changes do not take place in a vacuum, they occur within the context of the social worlds of the families, the schools, the peer groups and the other environments of the community. Lack of stability in the social worlds which structure and empower maturation, such as differences between the world views of the two dominant social worlds of the family and the peer group, can create confusion and conflict for youth. Despite their growing sense of mastery over their own perceptions, young people experience the world through their interaction with others and the values presented to them in the social settings.

As youth transform their dependent attachment on the family to a new interdependence with peers and other adults, they find a new autonomy of self from others, taking the initiative and seeking evidence, and making decisions and taking responsibility for them. These tentative movements into an autonomous sense of self should also lead to a growing awareness of their own personal characteristics, their interests, abilities, motivations, and competencies, or the lack of them. They also learn that there are offered or denied opportunities for being successful, and they come to link these with future lives and possibilities.

Community Sources of Influence: Transitional Worlds and Adults as Transitional Objects in Youths' Lives

The role structure of the community or organization must allow for believable roles for youth which are placed at appropriate developmental levels to allow for growth and to encourage reaching (Heath & McLaughlin, 1987; Ianni, 1989). It must also include some monitoring and evaluation of growth and movement among roles as a measure of the individual's power to influence the environment. Adult caregivers and service providers should also promote social network development among youth, increasing interaction by expanding their social contacts with other segments of the organization or community. This is often a successful

strategy for moving from a dependent caring, one fixed within the confines of its particular context, to a more mature, interdependent caring which allows for some individual experimentation. Expanding and exploring contacts includes promoting diversity in relationships, increased contact with a variety of caregiving adults, and building relationships between and among various components of the community or organization (Hanks & Eckland, 1978).

All of this exploration requires the opportunity to experience and participate in the variety of social and creative worlds that can enliven and enrich life. Young people need a chance to test their abilities and skills and have them evaluated, and to pursue their improvement and develop a sense of self-reliance and accountability. Their experience and participation must also be continuous and reinforcing, not occasional and disparate if it is to be meaningful in their lives. Meaningful participation also means the opportunity to interact with a variety of peers and adults, individuals, and groups expressing the care and offering the intimacy that allows tentative movement and mistakes, but reinforcing success and achievement. Over time youth come to identify with these interactive relationships and to accept and adopt their conventions, rules, and attitudes. They also fix their self-image within the possible selves they see or imagine from these interactions. Youth help to shape the environments within which their transformation takes place but they continue to seek help and guidance from others. While they are seeking autonomy and self-discovery, they are also engaged in a search for structure in their lives, a set of believable and attainable expectations and standards from their community's social contexts that can guide their self-exploration and help them construct an identity. If the values espoused by the different sectors of their community are at odds, if the standards and expectations are unclear or inconsistent, youth are abandoned to their own devices for rationalizing them.

How the various social environments which structure youngsters development are integrated, in terms of both continuity and congruence, can influence identity and the sense of fate control they experience. In a community where the various social institutions are at odds, where families feel that the school system devalues their children and fails to educate them while the school complains that parents do not properly prepare or motivate their young, where the workplace proclaims that it cannot hire these youth who are neither motivated by their family, or made literate by their schooling, youth experience identity conflict and the absence of a personal sense of fate control. In communities where the social institutions work together, where youngsters move easily from one social setting to another, and where there is an articulated set of standards and expectations, identity conflicts are minimized and youth have a more stable platform on which to project future roles and lives.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES IN GROWING UP

The complex and demanding requirements for social and individual development challenge youth and society and, like all challenges, they involve some risks. All youngsters face some risk factors at some time. Health hazards, accidents, uncaring parents or uninspired teachers, the temptations of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, too-early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and the anguish of loneliness can plague teenagers regardless of family background or where they live. Particularly problematic are environments where adherence to standards and expectations of one authority system (the family, for example) is viewed as an infraction against those of another (the school or the peer group).

Growing up entails greater risks for some than for others. Poverty, for example, compounds and exacerbates the risks that all young people face, and presents some, such as hunger or homelessness, which are a cost of being poor. Youngsters from racial or ethnic minorities, and recent immigrants and refugees, often must contend with all of the risks that attend poverty, while prejudice, bias, and differential access to opportunity structures further increase their risks of failure in life. For poor and minority youngsters, risk factors tend to be multiple and have greater impact because of the absence of social supports to mitigate them. Despite all of the risks, most youngsters in each of these groups make it through adolescence without significant scars and settle into a productive and fulfilling life course. Yet many do not, and the more risk factors youth face, the greater their chances of failure and the more urgent it is that we offer care, help, and support to help them have an equal chance at success.

Who Is at Risk of What?

Determining how many of America's youth are at risk is confounded by the absence of any agreed upon standards of child and adolescent well-being, and by differing social views of who is and who is not at risk of what physical or social malady. The Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development estimates that about seven million, or one out every four of the estimated 28 million youngsters between the ages of 10 and 17 in the United States, is in serious jeopardy from multiple risks, such as school failure, substance abuse, or early and unprotected sexual intercourse. They also estimate that another seven million may be at moderate risk from substance abuse and early intercourse, so that about half of all youth in the country are at serious or moderate risk (Dryfoos, 1990). The Fordham Institute tracked trends in child abuse, children living in poverty, drug abuse, infant mortality, teenage suicide, and dropping out of school, and reported a dramatic downfall of almost 50 percent in the social well-being of children and youth over the 1970s and 1980s (Jennings, 1989). But, while these statistics may report something about the possible dimensions of the problem, being at risk is an individual vulnerability to environmental risk factors that can be very different depending on how and where a youngster lives and what social supports from family, friends and adult caregivers are available.

The Family. Families orient youngsters to an ever expanding circle of contexts reaching out into the community and on into society. Their role is one of mediating between the child and that larger social reality but because families are influenced by those same social environments as their children's they themselves can produce some risk factors. Family violence and physical and sexual abuse of children by parents or siblings, as well as the devaluation of education and conventional behavior, are such risk factors. Ignorance or inattention to health hazards, nutrition, and safety

precautions in areas ranging from sexual behavior to automobile use and street behavior, can place youngsters at risk. Thus, while families should serve as buffers against risks, they can become part of the risk producing environment. Youngsters themselves are aware of the dangers they may face at home. Runaways most frequently speak of excessive discipline and violence, sexual and physical abuse or harassment, and the deprivation of love and care as the reasons for fleeing their families. Many teenage runaways who become prostitutes have been victims of incest and the resulting belief that offering sexual favors is an appropriate means of paying for love and care (Ianni, 1989). Similarly, many pregnant teenage females explain that their baby represents something they can love, and that they gain status as a mother that provides them with the attention, acclaim, and affection denied them as someone's child or student.

Poverty. Children are born into a particular cultural milieu, social class, community and neighborhood, and, as a result, into a clearly delineated and circumscribed social network. Most of the risks to which children can be exposed within their families are intensified when the family is imperiled by poverty and minority status. Teenage girls living in poverty, for example, are much more likely to become mothers than their more affluent peers, and poor youth have a significantly higher rate of unemployment and tend to earn less when they are employed. These factors suggest more than just the weakness of family buffers against risk factors or the deprivation from the poverty of family resources for building coping skills in youth. In fact, poor youth see fewer conventional role models and less evidence that effort and determination can lead to accomplishment. They have access only to constricted class networks reduce their chances of job and career mobility, inhibit aspirations, and increase their feelings of social isolation. In such environments, the social institutions which should work with the family are equally flawed in their ability to provide a sense of security, and they combine to provide a risk-filled rather than care-rich environment for their young people.

Disadvantaged Schools. While there are some dramatic examples of ghetto schools that make available an exemplary education and that produce impressive results, schools in both urban and rural poverty areas tend to be the poorest and weakest. All of the indicators of school success—various standardized tests, reading levels, rates of retention of one-or-more years in grades, absenteeism and alienation, and teachers' and students' expressions of satisfaction with the learning taking place—reflect unfavorably on schools in poor areas as contrasted with more affluent ones. These schools and the streets surrounding them are also less safe havens for learners, and frequently their larger size and greater diversity lead to increased anomie and alienation (Wetzel, 1987). Dropout rates for all youth are unacceptably high in these disadvantaged schools, but the rate is even higher for poor Hispanic Americans and African Americans living in poverty than for other ethnic and income groups. Dropouts are also much more likely to become delinquents or to enter the informal and underground economy.

Efforts to reform education have most often focused on in-school improvement. Now, however, it is becoming increasingly obvious that not only do schools need strong community support, but communities must be improved before they can provide such support. Educational psychologist Herbert Walberg, for example, after reviewing all of the research on student achievement, concluded that environmental factors "hold the best hope for increasing educational productivity" (Walberg, 1984). In delineating a theory of educational productivity, he indicated that the work on student achievement of Bloom, Bruner, Carrol, Glaser, and others identifies two familiar sets of factors that are commonly cited as necessary to increase affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning. These are: (1) student aptitude, which includes the factors of ability or prior achievement, development, and motivation; and (2) instructional factors, which include the amount of time students engage in learning, and the quality of the instructional experience. Walberg goes on to say that while these factors

are unquestionably of major importance in learning, they are really only partly alterable by educators and so do not offer the optimal vantage point for educational reform. There is, however, a third and less frequently considered set of factors that are environmental rather than school-specific: (1) enduring affection and stimulation from adults in the home; (2) the psychological climate of the classroom social group; (3) the out-of-school peer group and its learning interests, goals, and activities; and (4) the use of out-of-school time, particularly the amount of leisure-time television watching. Walberg sees these environmental influences as significantly more alterable than the in-school influences and maintains that they hold the best hope not only for educational reform, but also for improving the quality and productivity of social and behavioral learning for youngsters. He asserts that what might be called the "alterable curriculum of the home" is twice as predictive of academic learning as is family socioeconomic status. Bloom (1984) has made similar analyses, with similar results, and congruent recommendations for strengthening school and family ties.

At Risk for Delinquency

There has been some disagreement among delinquency experts on what leads youngsters to become delinquent and how to deal with it. One longstanding approach is to see delinquent youth as a subculture within and responding to the deviant communities of the country with equally deviant values and mores. Another approach sees delinquency as the result of inadequate or ineffective social controls and poor socialization. The deviant subculture approach places the onus on the community for bringing up its young with a distorted or deviant set of values, while social control theorists fault communities for improper socialization which leads young people to nonconformity with any set of values or norms. What is striking is not so much the difference between these approaches, but the emphasis on environmental risk factors rather than on individual

maladjustment or failure. The dangerous and deviant environments of impoverished and deprived youngsters can and do expose them to social networks of peers and adults that provide tantalizing illicit opportunities (Ianni & Reuss-Ianni, 1979). Life chances are also a function of teenagers' social environment. While white youths have three times as many chances of being killed in a motor vehicle accident than do minority youth, the risk of death by homicide is four times as great for the minority youth. White males are six times more likely to commit suicide than are African American females. Problems of drug abuse also differ according to residence in urban or suburban settings and socioeconomic status. Despite an overall decline in drug use, it still presents a major risk factor which again is greater for those in poverty. Urban inner-city youngsters are not only the unfortunate benefactors of the greater availability of drugs; they also tend to use "harder" and more destructive drugs than their suburban or rural peers. The reasons they give for abusing drugs also differ. Suburban youth attribute drug use to curiosity, peer pressure, and thrill-seeking, while inner-city youth speak much more ominously of grinding poverty, the powerlessness that accompanies unemployability, and alienation from a system that appears indifferent to or even implicated in the easy availability of drugs in their areas (Ianni, 1983).

Whether or not peer group influence is an important risk factor in teenage drug abuse, there are peer groups in many communities which, in isolation from adult supervision, form more-or-less-structured disruptive and deviant groups and become involved in antisocial and illegal behavior such as vandalism, drug and alcohol use and abuse, and shoplifting. The most structured and best known of these are the urban fighting gangs of males and, increasingly, their female auxiliaries, who exhibit and value impulsive aggression and hostility. Such gangs are built into the texture of their neighborhoods whose turf they often protect. These youth often tell of having to distance themselves from home environments lacking even the most rudimentary family structure to support a parent-child relationship.

They frequently come from single-parent homes where the mother is unable to maintain alone adequate behavioral controls; or if there is an adult male present, the youth is in rebellion against him, not infrequently because of seeing his mother abused or degraded. Fleeing or being pushed out into the streets, youth seek out the structure and the often severe strictures of the gang, where fidelity is to the gang and not to home or school. If neither the home nor the school provides the means of achieving an identity to allow some minimal sense of self-worth, the gang does so, and usually with more excitement and immediate gratification.

Mutually-Reinforcing Multiple Risk Factors

Each risk factor can be injurious to development and destructive to social competence and an integrated and rewarding identity achievement. The problem for those at greatest risk is that the factors are often interconnected, combining and reinforcing each other with devastating effects on the life course. Substance abuse and school failure can lead to early pregnancy for females and to lives on the fringes of employability and legitimate behavior for males. Even when the risks in one area are reduced, the lack of progress in another may render that success meaningless. Despite the fact that targeted programs have had a visible effect on reducing the incidence of dropping out among African American males, the unemployment rate among African American high school graduates is one-fifth higher than the rate for white high school dropouts (Wetzel, 1987).

MITIGATING THE RISKS IN YOUNG LIVES: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Despite the stark tragedy behind these perspectives on risk-filled social environments, most youngsters, including those burdened by poverty or inequality, manage to learn or find on their own the resources for coping with their stresses and for ultimately succeeding. They can overcome early educational deficits, little or no commitment to schooling by their parents, the absence of positive role models, association with peers who derogate conventional behavior, and any or all of the risk factors they must face. But these are individual coping efforts, requiring a resilience to hardship and exceptional intrinsic motivation on the part of the individual youngster, a family which values the child and can offer the comfort of caring, a teacher or a school dedicated to success, or some fortuitous combination of all of these.

Learning to Cope with Risks

Where do youngsters go when they are puzzled or troubled about getting to know themselves or negotiating their social environments? Teenagers do turn to peers for advice on questions of current styles or tastes but when the question concerns important present or future life crises or options, they look to adults for answers (Ianni, 1989). Parents and kinship-based relationships continue to be the most important source of such social support and care for youngsters regardless of residence or socioeconomic status. However, other adults are also valued. While we can start with the assumption that all youngsters crave and need help, not all can or will ask for it. Some youngsters learn to ask for help because they live in a help-rich environment with a large number of adults who have the resources and caring to offer it. Some places make it easy to ask for help while others make it difficult, or humiliating, or even potentially dangerous.

And, as always, the greater the risk factors in the lives of youths, the less experience they usually have in asking for help or even admitting that they need it. This fact suggests that we must consciously prepare youngsters to ask for help and to reduce inherent anxiety and hazards. Adults have to make known their willingness and resources for offering nonjudgmental help.

Caring and helping are not simply a matter of heart or conscience. There are personal and interactional characteristics which make for good caregivers and which young care-seekers look for in adults. Youth turn to adults because they appreciate their experience and knowledge. They continue to relate to them only to the extent that they believe they are learning and benefiting from the relationship. Thus, the first step in helping youngsters must be a mutual assessment of what the help-seeker is looking for and what the help-giver has to offer. This is essentially a process of negotiation, involving empathy, reciprocity, and the ability of the help-seeker to identify with the potential giver. Youngsters find it easier to identify with adults who are like them in gender and ethnicity, and even more important, in language, just as all of us are more likely to turn to family, friends, neighbors, or others with whom we feel some identification. But help-seeking is a response to a certain threshold of awareness that help is needed but not immediately available. In such cases, particularly in the absence of kin-based supportive networks, youth are most likely to bond with adults they think have the necessary knowledge and understanding, conditioned by what they think the giver will feel towards them and what obligations and indebtedness are involved.

Once the relationship is established it must go through a process of building trust, mutuality, and commitment on the part of the help-seeker, but, just as importantly, the giver as well. Here again there are certain recognized attributes of the relationship for the helper and caregiver to consider. Caring and helping require involvement and attachment.

Youngsters often mention the importance of attention, or interdependent attachment based on their perception of physical responses such as "looking at you when they are talking to you" or "smiling and being happy when they see me, and, more negatively, "showing they don't care by leaning away from you or avoiding eye contact." Caring and helping also take time. Nothing seems to signal attachment and caring for youngsters as much as the helper's willingness to give time on a regular and predictable basis. One of the interesting pieces of folk wisdom among mental health professionals is that patients will usually continue to come so long as there is a scheduled next appointment. Youngsters, particularly those who must come to the meeting place through unsafe and potentially violent streets, need to be assured of safety and security once they arrive. This means more than physical safety; it also depends on an assurance that the adults care about them as individuals.

Mutuality and interdependence should characterize the relationship. Providing opportunities for sharing can be important also. Most youngsters want to be needed and valued, and one of the important ways to show this is by accepting what they have to offer graciously but not condescendingly. The relationship between the caregiver and the help-seeker should be congruent with the needs of both and should provide continuity in a context modeling the type of relationship which both are trying to build. The character and visibility of the relationships between two parents, between or among teachers, between a youthworker or volunteer and his or her supervisor or colleagues all present and model for youth both the content and the process of learning to care and be cared for. Caring behavior and attitudes can also be modeled by adult helpers both proactively through initiation of behavior or reactively by the way they respond to initiated behavior from those they are helping.

Finally, working with groups of youths rather than in a person-to-person mentoring or modeling mode requires an awareness of

what facilitates group work with young people. Groups experienced as facilitating and developmentally successful by youth are most frequently characterized by: (1) a pattern of interdependent (not dependent) roles which provides opportunities for help- and caregiving and help- and care-seeking in terms of youth/adult, youth/youth and adult/adult relationships; (2) providing opportunities for all group members to give as well as to receive help and care; (3) helping to define the interchange of caring attitudes and behaviors in age appropriate and yet developmental ways, clearly defined and yet sufficiently flexible to allow for individual variability; and (4) providing a code of conduct or structure of expectations and standards for all members (Barnes, 1990; Bion, 1961; Ianni, 1989; Rogoff & Lave, 1984).

Ways of Helping and Coping

The late Philip Brickman and his associates examined the ambiance of various models of helping and coping and its effects on the relationships between those giving and those receiving help (Brickman, Rabinowitz, Kazura, Coates, Cohn, & Kidder, 1982). They make a distinction between assessing who is to "blame" for creating the particular problem which requires help and who bears the responsibility for correcting the problem. One model is a moralistic approach taking the position that those who create the problem are responsible for its solution. We hear this in childhood as "You made this mess, you clean it up," and in later life as "It's my problem, I'll take care of it!" If individuals fail to find a solution, they lack the proper motivation or they are "lazy." There is also a "compensatory model" which assumes that while one is not responsible for the problem, he or she *is* responsible for the solution. Here, Brickman points out, the potential deficiency is that youth who always see themselves as responsible for solving problems they did not create can develop a negative or even paranoid view of their environment. In the "medical model" the person helped is neither responsible for the problem nor

capable of solving it. The dependence this creates in the helped, and the distance it places between helper and helped is clear. Finally, there is an "enlightenment model" in which individuals are seen as responsible for their own problems but unwilling or incapable of solving them without some external source of discipline. Brickman chose the name "enlightenment" because a basic tenet of this approach, as exemplified in programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, is that individuals are "out of control" and need to be enlightened about the nature and reality of their problems.

These models are of more than academic or clinical interest because they demonstrate that caring and helping take place in real life interactive situations. They also admonish that we must be aware of how we are relating to those being helped and toward what end, and they offer some practical advice on anticipating the possible effects of our help on those being helped and how they view the help-giver. Some of what youngsters need to learn, like basic physical safety or health-hazard avoidance, may best be approached with the medical model which not only holds safe-harmless the person being helped but can be potent for training youth to take care of their bodies. Using the medical model to teach developing skills or growth-related behaviors is not so wise, however, since it denies youth the opportunity to test and develop the necessary skills. The compensatory model can be a caring and generous way of forgiving the absence of awareness or comprehension in youngsters from deprived backgrounds, or it can be a paternalistic and biased way of not recognizing the richness of different cultural heritages. Different models can be age-appropriate in one case but not in others, as anyone trying to use the moral model with older adolescents quickly discovers. What is most important is learning to fit what is of benefit to young people into the appropriate model and being willing to adjust and adapt when we do not succeed initially.

The Invulnerables: Inner Resilience or Social Support?

One dimension of differentiation in the coping skills of youngsters is their relative vulnerability to at-risk factors. Risk can be viewed differently by youngsters in the same environment: as a challenge or, conversely, as a self-defeating, personal disaster. It can be approached as a barrier or struggle to overcome or with resignation and defeat. Some youngsters seem to possess the inner strength and resources to take on these individual and collective human struggles alone. In our research we have come across numbers of youngsters who had overcome early social, emotional, and educational deficits and who were experiencing adolescence as the period of growth of awareness it should be. Such youngsters, seemingly "invulnerable children" as they have come to be called, have been discovered in a wide variety of adverse or high-risk environments, ranging from extreme poverty to schizophrenic and drug and alcohol abusing families. They appear to have some "inner resilience" which allows them to succeed where all of the odds suggest the certainty of failure (Anthony & Cohler, 1987).

Our interviews with such youngsters almost always revealed someone who cared, a family member who valued education, a teacher dedicated to educational excellence, a church or social agency with believable adult caregivers. What produced the most dramatic turnarounds were those environments that provided some fortuitous combination of these resources for caring, because they reinforced and sustained a youth charter demonstrating the importance of an articulated network of adult caregivers. Characterizing the limited number of cases of youngsters who had overcome significant childhood deficits to become physically and socially healthy, and successful, adults was the presence of caring adults and a caring public belief system to compensate for a missing supportive infrastructure in their homelife. It is, thus, possible for a youngster from an emotionally impoverished family—even one where there is little or no

commitment to positive social development and learning—to feel cared about and learn to care for others. A number of factors are involved:

(1) The discovery and acceptance of future identities by youth is sparked by significant adults' demonstration of what can be attained and the means to do so, and by the community's public belief system. In some community settings a congruent pattern of possible identities was modeled in various social contexts, and there was a coordinate attempt to provide the socialization processes necessary to achieve them. For example, one of the invulnerable youths we longitudinally followed was a young Dominican inner-city youth whose life of delinquency and truancy was turned around dramatically when a public defender referred him to a juvenile diversion program. The adults in the program developed for (and with) "Victor" created an environment where he could learn to care about himself and for others. In Victor's chaotic and socially and economically deprived childhood there had been none of the continuity and support essential to a sense of being cared for and about.

(2) We also found that the initiating intervention factor leading to social resources for youngsters from a disadvantaged natural environment was often the youth's personal "attractiveness" to some individual caregiver.

(3) Successful cases we saw were characterized by the incorporation of a wide range of social supports. In Victor's case, for example, while the original intervention was by the diversion program, finding him a job and getting him homework help not only expanded his vision of what he could do and become, but brought additional social support from teachers and employers and extended his social network to include conforming as well as caring adults. In addition

to the social buffering provided by this expanded social network, it offered a connectedness which allowed the youth to construct the infrastructure of caring that was absent from his childhood. The caregivers used a multidimensional and integrated approach that connected his sense of being cared for and about with a new basis for caring about himself and those around him.

(4) In essence, what the concerned professionals really did was to make Victor's life more predictable and to project roles in each of his social environments out of which he could consolidate an identity incorporating "something larger than me."

While the most dramatic cases of seeming invulnerability are seen in the inner-city where the crushing effects of poverty and social decay are most visible, cases can be found in every community, even the most affluent (Rutter, 1985). Youngsters who are ignored or abandoned by parents, whose career paths, job requirements, or social and personal problems take away the time and involvement needed by their children, also must learn to cope with a "not good enough" environment and still develop personal and social competence. Youth in rural areas where social services are often absent also must make greater efforts than their more environmentally fortunate peers. The struggle is the same for all of these youngsters and, whether they have some innate "inner resilience" or not, adult caregivers, both professional and volunteer, need to enrich their lonely and poorly structured worlds. Ideally both the youth's own resilience and the caring of adults combine to help the youth overcome obstacles what can seem like a chaotic and hostile world.

Some youngsters are attractive to an individual caregiver in some situations and others are not. This reality places a special burden on both professional and volunteer help-givers (Sarason, 1985). It is tempting to say that caregivers should ignore personal preferences and recognize

that there is beauty in everyone, but studies indicate that mental and physical health professionals have not always been able to do so. Being aware of and sensitive to the potential problem, and continuing self-evaluation, seems to be the most helpful in dealing with preferences (Kafka, 1989). Moreover, it is particularly important to actively seek out youth in need rather than to simply keep an open door policy for those able to take the first step themselves. It is also important to recognize the potential for growth and development in all of them no matter where or how they live.

Sooner or later, it becomes necessary to terminate caregiving relationships even when they have been mutually productive and rewarding. It is at this point that the transportability of what has been exchanged between giver and receiver becomes an issue. Leavetakings can be sad, even painful, occasions but they can also signal both the end of one relationship and the beginning of another. To some extent the change can be dealt with by reassurances that the caregiver will remain available in the future. However, creating overdependence can be harmful as well as illusory. What can each of the parties take with them to symbolize their new relationship? Part of this question is answered by the degree to which the person being helped has been able to internalize the visions, insights, and new social realities experienced in the relationship. Just as important, however, is the mutual building of new relationships and a facilitating environment within which youth can find constructive interdependence.

Making Connections and Building a Facilitating Environment

Communities differ considerably in how they structure and empower their youth charters, largely as a result of how they envision and organize the pattern of relationships among their institutions (Otto & Featherman, 1975). In our research on caring, we found that youth

distinguished among the institutional sectors of communities in terms of their expectations for the specific environment to facilitate or restrict their development, and the sector's character or etiquette of helping and caring. When we asked youth about where they sought and found help when they had problems, they expressed a different pattern of expectation of caring behavior in relation to different institutional settings. Not surprisingly, families were the most frequently mentioned locus for caring behavior at every age group:

> My mother goes through a lot of trouble to make sure that I make the bus every morning...sometimes she even goes outside to talk to Mrs. Maloney [the school bus driver] until I get there.
>
> —Male, 12 years old, rural area

As adolescence proceeded, there was a shift to peer groups, both in the frequency of the examples of caring behavior given and, more subtly, in the character of the care exemplified in the examples. In early adolescence a *dependent* caring imperative was most frequently cited. Moreover, the character of the caring also changed to one of *independent* caring, even in regard to family members.

Social agencies, community centers, religious fellowships or clubs, and places of employment also were frequently mentioned as contexts for caring. Schools were not as frequently cited but particular teachers or classes, school friends, and school activities, such as athletic teams or extracurricular groups, were mentioned.

We also observed an etiquette or protocol of caring, a stylized way of seeking or extending care in different institutional contexts. While some contextual characteristics, such as the size and the degree of intimacy engendered by the context, seemed to be important factors, interviews strongly suggested that the initiation or the inhibition of both care-seeking and caregiving was a function of the emotional expectations of the giver or

seeker. Here again, the family seemed to provide the most risk-free environment; young people said they felt they could seek care in the family almost as a given. Friends, and, particularly in urban inner-city areas, proximate peer groups also were frequently mentioned, usually with some comment suggesting this characteristic was the core value of the relationship. Outside these relationships, however, the context seemed to constrain the type of spontaneity and caring. Teen-age students in all of the communities we studied said that they felt they could expect teachers to care about their academic or behavioral problems but would not go to them with other problems. Conversely, teachers frequently said that the "whole child" notion was fine in theory but that they only saw the students for a few hours a day for a few months each year and that they were being expected to make up for cultural, social, and behavioral deficits which were the responsibility of the family and other institutions.

We found a number of examples of inter-institutional contexts—home-school, home-church, home-social agency, school-home-criminal justice program and other configurations. In each of these cases we found that "caring" was an explicit and central concern of the developmental charter of the program as well as a dimension of program activities. What seemed most impressive was that a new etiquette facilitating both care-seeking and caregiving emerged in these environments and that both adults and teenagers seemed to know where and how to look for appropriate forms of caring (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Organizing Community Resources to Optimize Help and Care for Youth

Most theories of the self include some form of reciprocity between the self-concept of the individual and the social structure. I have always found that youth constantly rediscover and recognize themselves in interaction with institutional social structures and that ultimately, as Turner

(1968) says, "social roles constitute the organizing framework for the self-conception." Kohut also describes a "transmuting internalization" of the psychological environment which crystallizes a "nuclear self" (Kohut, 1971). Both Turner and Kohut indicate that elements of the social structure are *selectively* internalized by individuals to create a workable view of themselves. In my experience, those agencies, schools, and other social contexts which are perceived as caring consciously build relationships among elements of the three structural domains we identified (organizational culture, psychological climate, and roles and role relationships) that make caring as a basic requirement. Many of the youth in these programs that we interviewed were able to internalize program characteristics (such as caring) and use them as behavior guides even when they were outside the particular context.

At the institutional context level, it was apparent in each of the settings we studied that while the larger organizational context could encourage caring attitudes or behavior, it was in the smaller social networks where social support and self-valuation took place, and where the social rewards for appropriate behavior were presented. In every setting, and in virtually every interview, we found that the youth's use of caring-associated terms or understanding of their meaning occurred in some interpersonal context--that is to say where trust, mutuality, and some form of reciprocity were expected, were consistent, and had been tested over time. At the same time, we found that the larger social context was most influential in the translation of these feelings, attitudes, and behaviors into more communal forms.

Of most immediate value in turning communities into facilitating and caring environments was a set of characteristics which operated only at the organizational or community level. We found that these environmental variables were of two broad types: structural and cultural. One set of structural variables was closely associated with the institutional

sector with which they were affiliated. Thus, schools are structured differently from families, criminal justice agencies from churches, and so on. The structural variables were: (1) the size of the organization or community, (2) the pattern of roles and role relationships, (3) the regularity and continuity of interaction, (4) the presence of interactive and interdependent activities, and (5) the articulated governance structure.

The other set of variables was associated with the organizational or community culture. Important among these were a shared sense of mission and coordinate values. A second set of cultural variables encompassed the organization's artifacts, its symbols of membership, the legends and myths, the culture heroes, and rites and ceremonies symbolizing "belonging." Another cultural feature related to caring was comprised of the underlying cultural assumptions, those largely unconscious or undiscussed beliefs shared by members. Finally, there was a reinforcing connectedness among the various cultural variables weaving them together so that they emerged as a set of themes, an ideology or a belief system.

How Adults Can Serve as Caring Mediators for Youth

Behavior of Individuals. Modeling of caring behavior and attitudes by adults in their interaction with each other as well as with youth is a critical factor in their ability to serve as mediating caretakers for youth. Of particular importance is the conscious design of a series of roles and role relationships to permit or even require the modeling of caring behavior and attitudes. The relationship between two parents, between or among teachers, between a youthworker and his or her supervisor or colleagues all present and model both the *content* and the *process* of caring to youth. Similarly, the extension of caring behavior or attitudes from adults to youth, whether initiated or reactive, must be designed in such a way that it can be understood and replicated by the youth with the resources available to them.

We found that adults working with youth gangs demonstrated a number of functional role characteristics which expressed caring behaviors and attitudes. One important characteristic was the convening or legitimizing of the group. A related characteristic was providing information, validation, and guidance to the membership by helping to establish and maintain a structure for communication within the group and between the group and its context. The ability and willingness of adults to provide or increase existing resources for the youth group was also important, whether the resources were emotional, social, or physical, such as space or equipment. Finally, the training or recognition of youth leadership was a frequently mentioned or observed characteristic of caring adults.

Organizational Characteristics. How communities structure and empower youth's social environments and the dynamics of the relationships among institutions can be more important than the individual contributions of the family, the school, peer groups, or voluntary agencies. It is, however, critical that youngsters hear the same messages from all adult-sanctioned institutions. This consistency demands a normative system which has clear, structured, and openly expressed social and behavioral expectations, as well as standards to be used in meeting those expectations.

As discussed above, it is sometimes necessary to construct or reconstruct the missing infrastructure in youngsters' lives. This requires dealing with a youth's multiple deficits and multiple risks through a multidimensional and integrated approach, rather than with a number of unrelated and sometimes competing efforts by different adults. The purpose of this infrastructure is not just to provide a safety net, but also to provide a sense of connectedness with "something larger than me." Social network development is an important preparatory step in setting youth back into their original social environment. Expanding contacts involves promoting diversity in relationships, increasing contact with a variety of

caregiving adults, and building relationships among a youth's various caregivers. It also involves linking youth to the wide range of available community supports. Wynn and her associates have identified these as: (1) opportunities to participate in organized, ongoing groups; (2) avenues for contributing to the well-being of others; (3) sources of personal support; and (4) access to the use of community facilities and events including museums, libraries, parks, civic events and celebrations (Wynn, Richman, Rubenstein, & Littell, 1988).

Contextual Variables in Roles, Role Definitions, and Relationships

We found that role definitions differ by context (institutional, demographic, and geographical) and that definitions and expectations of caring are mediated by these contextual differences. Mediator roles can be formal (e.g., parent, teacher, police officer, youth group leader) or informal, and they can develop as a result of unplanned social contact between youth and adults which result in the recognition of shared interests and mutual respect and caring. Regardless, they take their character from the context within which they develop, probably because of the experiential basis of learning to care. We also found a visible pattern of differentiation among institutional contexts in the caring roles and role relationships, and in the ordering of social roles and network interrelationships. The development of role definitions and responsibilities specifically designed to eliminate or reduce role conflict (supportive, helping, or therapeutic, for example) was particularly important. The most successful approach we saw was one of viewing the context as a system of support groups to provide interrelated caring roles for all members.

There are numerous benefits of being part of a group, such as collective empowerment; the multiplier effects of skills, talents, experience, and resources; and the interactive effects of a responsive audience. Most

important were the benefits from having both adults and youths working together on productive tasks and problem-solving activities. What this provided was the opportunity for real time experience in building and maintaining caring one-to-one and group-oriented communal caring relationships.

A related aspect of such roles and role relationships is their provision of a caring infrastructure in the community or organization. Their infrastructure was designed to ensure that everyone was included, recognizing the fact that some youngsters are attractive, others are not, because empathy requires the ability to identify and share some common background or experience. Such infrastructures also make developing attachments among individuals and groups a major priority, and they provide the continuity and interventions necessary to sustain attachments once they are developed. In addition, they foster confidence as a major component of these attachments and act to institutionalize caring in the decision-making and governance structure of the community or organization.

The Importance of a Community-Based Collaborative Role for Youth Professionals

The Community. Learning to care and to seek and accept help are heavily dependent on early experiences, take time and attention, and cannot be expected to occur in the natural order of things. If communities choose to enact a meaningful charter for youth development, they must not just publicly proclaim the value of caring about youth, but must also provide the human, financial, and political resources necessary for its implementation. One major requirement is the provision of a responsive and effective service delivery system.

Making successful development a priority in the community youth charter should not lead to the creation of a new bureaucracy, but to effective use of the individual and network resources in the community. The premise should be that all youngsters, no matter how socially fortunate, are at some risk of deprivation where caring is concerned. Intervention programs, called "social inoculation" by Pilisuk (1982), should be developmental and be introduced early in the lives of children, and they should continue through adolescence.

Establishing a youth charter should not preclude development of remediation or special programs for those youth with particular deficits or problems. However, we should give the greatest priority to establishing an infrastructure to provide and foster the ability to care. A modest beginning might be to strengthen the bonds of caring between the two primary caregiving institutional sectors in every child's life: the family and the school (Cremin, 1988; Epstein, 1987, 1988).

My own work (Ianni, 1983, 1989) and that of Heath and McLaughlin (1987), Wynn et al. (1988), and others indicate that while we might begin at the school-family level, what is really necessary is the development of a community-wide collaborative service model. Of critical importance is reform in the training and career development of youth professionals to emphasize caring at primary points (Ianni, 1989; Leininger & Watson, 1990; Noddings, 1988; Sarason, 1985).

The School. While the decline of the more intimate institutions embodied in the family and the school has been particularly devastating for youth, family and school are both the last hope of providing the resources for an ethic of caring and the most dependent for resources on the other institutional sectors. Coleman and Hoffer (1987), differentiating public and private schools, see a sense of community in the private school as a value while in the public school context "...each individual and each

family is a resource to the community, and decisions which withdraw these resources from the community are decisions which make the community a less valuable resource."

Youth professionals are usually restricted in their vision and means for dealing with youth compassionately by both their training and the focus of their social institutional settings. Youth employment specialists, teachers, and criminal justice professionals who claim to be unable to do anything constructive with adolescents because of early childhood deficits usually look within their own institutional setting for the means of helping at-risk youth despite the growing evidence that youth generally have multiple sources of problems. Thus, the schools—and particularly the high school—have become the principal remediator of social ills. But their approach has been restricted to adding new courses to the curriculum in the belief that this is the best method of prevention as well as of cure. Widespread drug use led to drug education courses, just as problems with alcohol have led to alcohol education programs, and the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is inevitably leading to AIDS education programs.

I suggest that since there must be some locus for developing a collaborative professional approach to providing a caring and facilitating environment for all children, the school, which is an institution in every community and has a publicly accepted role in socialization and enculturation, should be this locus.

Schools can be instrumental in providing the community and its institutions with a structure for transmitting its expectations and standards for adolescents, but they can't do it alone (Lipsitz, 1977). All the relationships youth witness help teach them what they believe they will need to know in the future.

Thus, caring can be provided and learned in other community and institutional contexts. Their youth charters must be adapted to the community's symbols, artifacts, and injunctions to changing demographic, cultural, political, and economic conditions, usually through some formal mechanism, such as a community-wide planning group or a collaborative model of professional relationships. Adult caregivers can help youth make the transition to adulthood by offering them the security of what Hartman described as a "good-enough" environment (1958). Institutions, individually and collectively, can offer a source of structure for internalizating the social world and rationalizing the variety of roles the developing youth is required to assume.

Professional Caregivers. In every community, but particularly in the urban inner-city, there is a tension between professional perspectives on youth and their problems and caregiving realities. For example, because youth who are "needy" for care are often not attractive, some professionals are wary of making unprofessional judgments. Supervisory warnings about becoming too involved in the emotional lives of clients or patients, and staff evaluation and promotion programs emphasizing "measurable" aspects of professional growth, to the detriment of empathetic and compassionate relationships, sometimes generate negative feelings toward those most in need. The problem of youngsters getting lost or falling through the net where agencies, families, schools, and other sectors do not have a collaborative, programmatic vision of youthcare, and the often parochial concerns of the various institutional sectors of the community also contribute to unease about training, career development, and tailoring service delivery to particular professional specialties. Yet, our experience in the inner-city indicates that all of the youth serving professions share a belief in the value of caring and a commitment to compassion.

BUILDING SERVICE COMMUNITIES FOR YOUTH

In describing the move from egocentricity to sociality in the psychology of moral progress, Flugel (1945) points out that as development proceeds,

> the circle of...others continually enlarges, e.g., by including those who are known to us conceptually and not merely perceptually,...by extending them to ever wider classes within the community...by extending still further to members of the human race outside our own community so that the whole of mankind is eventually included...At these higher stages of development the transition to sociality depends...not only on the appreciation of the rights and feelings of other individuals as such, but upon the formation of ideas and sentiments relating to whole social groups (p. 243).

Flugel is describing is basic rationale for a constructionist approach to building communities to serve rather than to restrict youth development. When we first design or set out to change institutions, we often begin with the structural aspects by rearranging the organization chart to shift power; or we design new physical space, thinking of this as providing a new "environment"; or we change or rearrange programs and procedures, assuming that this will create a new reality. Our field experience, however, suggested that these measures were often less than successful because they failed to include a conscious effort to change the organizational culture and the psychological climate. Culture and climate are far more powerful in changing the underlying beliefs and assumptions supporting the shared values and the realty which bond individuals in communities and organizations (Schein, 1985).

Not only should changes in culture and climate accompany any structural change, they should be consciously evaluated and considered for change in themselves. Indeed, where helping and caring for youth are

concerned, culture should be conceived of as the "story line" which exposes to a community of individuals its experienced environment and, eventually, its world in a particular perspective. Narrative psychologists believe that cultural artifacts, stories, legends, myths, and symbols are far more powerful than structural mechanisms, scientific reasoning, and quantitative evidence, when we are concerned with questions of emotion or affect, morals or ethics, "the meaning of life" questions we all share with youth (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, 1982; Spence, 1982). Therefore, we should turn to the culture of the organization if we want to embed shared images of caring behavior and basic beliefs about the importance of caring. This means enriching that culture with artifacts and legends, culture heroes, and the literature supporting it with ideological (in the true meaning of the word) notions about caring attitudes and behaviors. (Geertz, 1973; Greene, 1988).

Viewed in this fashion, the enculturation of youth has as its ultimate aim developing a shared belief system about caring which is expressed in shared values. This does, of course, come close to sounding like indoctrination, but I differentiate enculturation from indoctrination on the basis of its providing resources for individual identity construction rather than providing a modal personality for all youth.

In talking or thinking about communities and their institutional contexts, we have a tendency to think about them as fixed organizational systems which respond to structural and personnel changes but have enduring social and cultural properties which are resistant or even immutable to change. Thus, we ask the question "What will schools be like" more often than we ask "How shall we educate in the year 2001?" If we seek to build or transform a community or institution, however, it is necessary to look to the conceptualization and codification of new forms of behavior, new patterns of relationships, new symbols and artifacts to transform the culture. We can socialize and enculture for achievement, as

do the Japanese (DeVos, 1975), or we can make an ethic of caring and sharing our goal, as did the Navaho (Kluckhohn & Leighton, 1974). Actually, we can do both and just about anything else we want since, if we view values as a means of empowering and enhancing rather than restricting or controlling human behavior, there is considerable leeway in how we define the optimal personality or the ideal person or lifestyle. As a result of differential cultural and subcultural experiences and different traditions, we have different perceptions. We read the contexts of our lives differently and so construct different propositional networks about what we want to do and be, but we should all be reading from the same menu. Questions, and even radical doubts about means and ends, should develop out of disagreement or dissent rather than ascribed ignorance or planned disenfranchisement.

Further, if enhanced and extended values of caring are to become part of subjective culture, we must develop a new language of presentation to ensure common understanding. For example, Piaget (1960) distinguished between the morality of constraint, in which there is unquestioning obedience to adult norms, and the morality of cooperation, which grows out of an understanding of the motives involved, leading to an autonomous conscience. If moral judgments by youth are to be purposive and not random, we should enculture a constructive and empowering morality instead of supporting a constraining one. Also, moral values should grow out of "compassion" instead of "justice," "equity" instead of "rights." Bohannan (1957) recounts a story about how, among the Tiv of Nigeria, the plaintiff to a dispute made up a taunting song which he and his kinsmen sang every night within earshot of his antagonist whose kinsmen made up equally insulting songs to sing back. The contest was eventually moved into the tribal court where the chief found in favor of the plaintiff in the dispute but awarded the victory in the singing contest to the defendant.

Each generation believes it possesses the accumulated wisdom and vision essential to successfully raise their children and to their children's children, and does not want to accept that the risks children face are not all of their own making. The facts are, however, that children did not invent drugs or alcohol, or ways to abuse them; they learned that from adults. Youthful sexuality has changed much more as a result of a general relaxation of sexual taboos than of any change in teenage behavior, and AIDS did not originate among teenagers; it was another of the hazards passed on by adults. Other risks, such as delinquency and unemployment, follow similar demographic and cyclical patterns among youth as they do among adults. And some, such as poor eating and other health habits, are first learned at home. Adults have more to offer young people than bad habits and risk factors. There are many opportunities for positive adult-youth interactions within communities and each should recast risks to be feared into challenges to be faced and ensure that no youngster need face them alone.

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